Unit .31

Session .03

The Church Is Sent to Proclaim Jesus

Scripture

Hebrews 1:1-3; 8:1-6; 10:11-18

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets
at different times and in different ways. 2 In these last
days, he has spoken to us by his Son. God has appointed
him heir of all things and made the universe through
him. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the
exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by
his powerful word. After making purification for sins,
he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.
...**1** Now the main point of what is being said is this:
We have this kind of high priest, who sat down at the
right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,
2 a minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that
was set up by the Lord and not man. **3** For every high
priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; therefore,
it was necessary for this priest also to have something to
offer. **4** Now if he were on earth, he wouldn't be a priest,
since there are those offering the gifts prescribed by the
law. **5** These serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly
things, as Moses was warned when he was about to
complete the tabernacle. For God said, **Be careful that
you make everything according to the pattern that
was shown to you on the mountain.** **6** But Jesus has
now obtained a superior ministry, and to that degree
he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been
established on better promises. ... **11** Every priest stands
day after day ministering and offering the same sacrifices
time after time, which can never take away sins. **12** But
this man, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat
down at the right hand of God. **13** He is now waiting
until his enemies are made his footstool. **14** For by one
offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified.
15 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. For
after he says: **16 This is the covenant I will make with
them after those days, the Lord says, I will put my laws
on their hearts and write them on their minds,** **17** and
I will never again remember their sins and their lawless
acts. **18** Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is
no longer an offering for sin.

Intro Options

Main Point:
The redemption anticipated by the old covenant is fully experienced in Jesus.

Option 1

In groups of two or three, your students should come up with someone who (they think) is or was indisputably the best in their field. It could be Albert Einstein in science, Michael Jordan or Kobe Bryant in basketball, Taylor Swift in music, or whatever other fields they can think of.

Let each group share their "indisputable best." If any students want to disagree, allow a brief back-and-forth while each side defends their position, but don't lose much time on it or allow an argument to develop. The goal is to state who they think is best and why.

Ask them what parallels they saw, if any, across all the "bests" they came up with. Today's lesson will be about how Jesus was indisputably the best in three categories: His revelation of God, His priesthood, and His sacrifice. Do they see any parallels between the "bests" they came up with and Jesus?

Option 2

- **Can you think of some things that are better than they once were?**

Show your group some pictures of an object through the years and ask them to tell you which one they think is the best. Print or display three pictures of different options over time, such as a car from the early 1900s, late 1900s, and today; a computer from the 1970s, 1990s, and today; a phone from the 1950s, early 2000s, and today; a TV from the mid 20th century, late 20th century, and today.

We may look back on some of those things with nostalgia and think, "Those were the good ole days." But if we are honest, all of those things have gotten better over time. The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is better than all the different revelations and institutions of the Old Testament. They all merely anticipated His work, but Jesus is the better revelation, High Priest, and sacrifice.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Hebrews 1:1-3.

Through Scripture, God has revealed Himself to us. That is why we call it special revelation. God has revealed Himself in a specific way, and He did that in the Old Testament through prophets.

- **What are some things God revealed about Himself through the Old Testament?**

In the Scriptures we find that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, sovereign, faithful, merciful, etc. These things can be seen throughout the Old Testament, but they are more fully and gloriously revealed in Jesus Christ. God's greatness is most clearly displayed in Jesus.

- **What are some ways Jesus fully reveals God and His attributes?**

Jesus is all-powerful (Col. 1:16-17). Jesus is all-knowing (John 1:48, Matt. 12:25). Jesus is ever present (Matt. 28:20). Jesus is sovereign (Matt. 28:18). Jesus is eternal (John 8:58). Jesus is unchanging (Heb. 13:18).

God used to speak through prophets, but now He has spoken through Jesus. The pinnacle of God's self-revelation is the incarnation of God the Son, Jesus Christ. He is the radiance of God's glory, meaning He is God's glory on display. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:6, our hearts can see "God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ." Jesus is able to do this because He is the eternal God in the flesh. Therefore, He perfectly displays God's attributes for us to see.

Read Hebrews 8:1-6.

Jesus is a high priest who mediates a new and better covenant. His mediation has been performed in heaven itself (Heb. 8:2), and has been completed, for Jesus "sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb. 8:1). The old covenant priesthood and its temple were never meant to be permanent, but merely a copy of the heavenly temple and the shadow of which Christ was the substance.

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 24, DDG)

Christ as Priest

As our Great High Priest, Jesus accomplishes the work of reconciling us to God. He is the One whose perfect righteousness is presented to the Father for our justification. He is the One who intercedes for us before the Father (Heb. 7:25; 9:24) and prays for us to remain faithful (Luke 22:31-32; John 17).

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
The redemption anticipated by the old covenant is fully experienced in Jesus.

Hebrews 1

1:1-2 "[The early church] was convinced that the salvation promised long ago in the Scriptures had actually become a reality through what Jesus had done. How could they keep quiet? In such a day of good tidings they could not hold their peace."[1]

1:2 — The author of Hebrews says, "in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:2). It is important to understand that the last days were inaugurated in the Son's incarnation. We tend to think of the "end times" as the book of Revelation, but eschatology is more than just the final years of history. Jesus' resurrected body is the first glimpse of the New Creation. His arrival marked "the end of the ages" (Heb. 9:26), and His church is a new covenant people "on whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:11). May we live as kingdom people with an eschatological mission.

Hebrews 8

8:1-6. "Do not consider that any will be heard and saved by God apart from the merits of His Son. If you would be at peace with God, you must come to him through Christ, the mediator." [2]

There are a number of new covenant promises which expand upon the old covenant promises. Take the land promise, for example. The old covenant promised a portion of land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, but in the new covenant, the meek shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5), and all things are ours, "whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world" (1 Cor. 3:21-22).

Moreover, we are heirs of the kingdom (Jas. 2:5) and have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28). God has poured out "His Spirit on all flesh" (Acts 2:17), He given us the Spirit as the "guarantee of our inheritance (Eph. 1:14). That inheritance is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven" for us (1 Pet. 1:4). All of these things, and more, are secured only in the new covenant through Jesus.

1. Michael Green, Evangelism in the Early Church (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004).
2. Charles Spurgeon, The Spurgeon Study Bible (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).
3. R. Kent Hughes, Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul, Volume 1 (Preaching the Word) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1993).

In Defense (p. 26, DDG)

"Jesus is a superior revelation of God. When we see him, we know just what the God of the universe is like. We know how he thinks. We know how he talks. We know how he relates to people. God has spoken in His Son. It is his ultimate communication, his final word, his consummate eloquence. Oh, the superiority of the Son!"[3]

TEACHING PLAN

This is one place where the "Sunday school answer" is simply the best one—Jesus! The new covenant is better because we have a better mediator. He offers a better sacrifice and secures a better salvation. The old covenant priests merely foreshadowed the work of Jesus, but Jesus' priesthood performs a mediation that is complete and eternal. As a result, the new covenant actually secures better promises.

- **What are some new covenant promises that are better than old covenant promises?**

There are three main things found in the next few verses that the author of Hebrews is referring to when he says the new covenant is established on better promises: He says God will write His law on our hearts and minds (Heb. 8:10), we will truly know the Lord (Heb. 8:11), and God will remember our sins no more (Heb. 8:12).

Read Hebrews 10:11-18.

Notice how the Levitical priests are "standing," but Jesus "sat down at the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:11-12). They are ministering "day after day," but Jesus has offered "one sacrifice for sins forever" (Heb. 10:11-12). The contrast is clear, and it points to the reality that Jesus' atoning work, as He said on the cross, is finished. How is that possible? It's possible because Jesus was more than just a better high priest, He was also a better sacrifice. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

And what makes Jesus's sacrifice better? The animal sacrifices were without blemish externally, but Jesus was without blemish morally. To choose a spotless lamb in the old testament merely anticipated the spotless Savior, Jesus Christ. He perfectly fulfilled the law, making Him the perfect substitute that no other creature could be.

- **Is it a struggle for you to believe that God has completely forgiven your sins?**

God promises to never again remember our sins and lawless acts (Heb. 10:17), but so often we are plagued with the guilt and shame of our past. Sometimes we think, "God could never forgive me." This is not an insult to ourselves; it insults and degrades Jesus' sacrifice! We are saying, "What Jesus did was not enough," when we let our past sins define us. Believe that your sins are covered and walk in freedom. Don't let your own disbelief or the deception of the evil one steal your faith in Jesus' work on the cross. Truly, He has "perfected forever those who are sanctified" (10:14).

- **What have you learned today from Hebrews that has expanded your view of Jesus?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
The redemption anticipated by the old covenant is fully experienced in Jesus.

Hebrews 10

10:11-18. "In summary, the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross has purchased forever our redemption and right standing before God. In Christ, shadow has given way to substance; the temporary has been replaced with the eternal; the imperfect has become perfect; judgment has become mercy; and law has become grace."[4]

"I know only one thing—He bore my sins in His body upon the tree. He hung where I should have hung. The pains of hell that were my portion were heaped on Him, and I am able to go to heaven and merit that which is not my own, but is His by every right. All the types, the offerings, the shadows, and the symbols of the Old Testament were now fulfilled. No longer do the priests have to enter once a year into the Holiest Place. The sacrifice was complete." [5]

"Every religion is giving swimming lessons to drowning men. The techniques may vary, but the instructors remain together, safe in the boat. Except one. One dives in. One submerges to the ocean floor. One saves."[6]

Activity

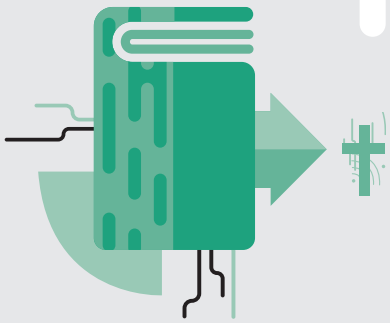
Break your students into groups of twos or threes and give each group an index card. On that card, they should write down a problem a middle schooler might have: it could be an issue with self-image, a relationship issue, a motivation issue, etc. Once they've written down the problem, collect them and then redistribute them at random, giving each group one of the cards (it's okay if a group gets the same problem they came up with).

Today's lesson talked about three aspects of how Jesus is better: His better revelation of who God is, His better priesthood, and His better sacrifice. Your students should take whatever problem they have on their card and consider how at least one of those better aspects of Jesus can help the student in that situation. For example, someone struggling with self image could see that Jesus has perfectly revealed God's love for us, regardless of how we perceive ourselves. Someone struggling with a relationship could see how Jesus is our perfect High Priest; His reconciling us to God gives us hope for reconciling with others through grace. End by pointing out that many, if not all, of these problems are not unique to Christians. How might your students share Jesus with non-Christians who are struggling with these problems?

4. David L. Allen, Hebrews (New American Commentary) (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010).
5. Billy Graham, Peace with God: The Secret Happiness (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000).
6. Matt Smethurst, Twitter post, May 7, 2018, 8:31 a.m., https://twitter.com/MattSmethurst/status/993483416942338049

(p. 25, DDG) Christ Connection

Jesus is better than the ancient prophecies and institutions because He is the One who fulfills them. Jesus is the Word of God who came so that we might experience a better salvation through His perfect life, death, and resurrection.



THE CHURCH IS SENT TO PROCLAIM JESUS

The redemption anticipated by the old covenant is fully experienced in Jesus.

JESUS CONNECTION

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

RELIABILITY – Living so that others can depend on me.

HEAD

How is Jesus described in Hebrews 1:1-3?

Contrast the role of the high priest in the old covenant with the new covenant by filling in the right side of the chart below:

Old Covenant (Law of Moses)	New Covenant (In Christ)
Heb. 8:5 – Served in the tabernacle and temple	Heb. 8:1-2 –
Heb. 8:5-6 – Spoke to God on behalf of the people	Heb. 8:1-2, 6 –
Heb. 10:11 – Offered sacrifice for sin over and over	Heb. 10:12 –
Heb. 10: 11 – Sacrifice cannot take away sins	Heb. 10:12, 14 –

HEART

How can remembering that Jesus is a faithful mediator for you help you to depend on Him each day?

Do you believe that Jesus is completely reliable? What keeps you from relying on Jesus' work on the cross to save, cleanse you from sin and help you live for Jesus?

HANDS

God is entirely reliable and faithful; He never lets us down. But as humans, we often make mistakes, act foolishly and choose to sin. We can't be perfectly reliable like God, but we can develop a pattern of reliability in our lives. Write either DEPEND ON or RELIABLE down the left-hand side of a piece of paper, one letter on each line. For each letter you wrote, think of a word that starts with that letter that describes someone others can depend on. (For example, you might choose *loyal* for L or *ethical* for E). Post your acrostic and read it every day this week, asking God to help you be more like Jesus in this area.